

Remarks

In the Office action of January 3, 2006, claims 1-44, 56-61, 66, 67, 70, 71, 74-76, 81-96, 101-103, 106-110 and 112-122 were pending. Claim 83 has been cancelled, and claims 56, 59, 81, 85, 93, 94, 101, 106, 107, 108, and 112 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-44, 56-61, 66, 67, 70, 71, 74-76, 81, 82, 84-96, 101-103, 106-110 and 112-122 are currently pending. Applicant notes with appreciation the allowance of claims 1-44, 66, 67, 70, 71, 74-76, 86-89, 91, 92, and 114-119.

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Objections and Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 90 has been amended to correct the cited informalities and is now in condition for allowance. The subject matter of allowed claim 83 has been amended into independent claims 81 and 85, and therefore, claims 81, 85, and dependent claims 82, 84, and 120 which depend from and further limit claim 81 are now in condition for allowance.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 56-61

Claims 56-61 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,402,785 to Zdeblick et al. ("Zdeblick"). The PTO provides in MPEP § 2131 that "[t]o anticipate a claim, the reference must teach every element of the claim..." Therefore, with respect to amended independent claim 56, to sustain this rejection the Zdeblick reference must contain all of the elements of the claim. This rejection is respectfully traversed because claim 56 as amended recites, *inter alia*, "in the absence of a compressive load, an upper shoulder is recessed into a portion of the perimeter of the upper contact surface and a lower shoulder is recessed into a portion of the perimeter of the lower contact surface." Thus, for at least this reason, claim 56 is allowable over the Zdeblick reference and is therefore in condition for

allowance. Claims 57 and 58 depend from and further limit claim 56 and are therefore also in condition for allowance.

With respect to amended independent 59, to sustain this rejection the Zdeblick reference must contain all of the elements of the claim. This rejection is respectfully traversed because claim 59 as amended recites, *inter alia*, “the upper shoulder defines a ledge indented into and around the perimeter of the upper contact surface of the central body.” Thus, for at least this reason, claim 59 is allowable over the Zdeblick reference and is therefore in condition for allowance. Claims 60-61 depend from and further limit claim 59 and are therefore also in condition for allowance.

Claims 81-82, 84, 85, 93-96, 101-103, 106, and 120-122

Claims 81-82, 84, 85, 93-96, 101-103, 106, and 120-122 stand rejected under 35 U.S. C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 5,674,296 to Bryan et al. (“Bryan”). As described above, claims 81 and 85 have been amended to include the allowed subject matter of claim 83 and therefore independent claims 81, 85, and dependent claims 82, 84, and 120 which depend from claim 81 are in condition for allowance.

The PTO provides in MPEP § 2131 that “[t]o anticipate a claim, the reference must teach every element of the claim...” Therefore, with respect to amended independent claims 93, 94, 95, 96, 101, 103, and 106 to sustain the rejections the Bryan reference must contain all of the elements of the claims. This rejection is respectfully traversed because:

- independent claim 93 as amended recites, *inter alia*, “the central body is bounded by an outer surface and further wherein the entire outer surface is impregnated with a surface hardening substance;”
- independent claim 94 as amended recites, *inter alia*, “an encapsulated elastomeric central body that is bounded by an outer surface and wherein the entire outer surface is impregnated with a surface hardening substance;”
- independent claim 95 recites, *inter alia*, “an encapsulated central body that is impregnated with a surface lubricity increasing material;”

- independent claim 96 recites, *inter alia*, “the central body is impregnated with a surface lubricity increasing material;”
- independent claim 101 as amended recites, *inter alia*, “a coating material encasing the central body wherein . . . the coating material has a different hardness from the resilient, deformable portion;”
- independent claim 103 recites, *inter alia*, “a central body having . . . a polymer coating thereon, wherein the coating increases the surface lubricity of the central body;”
- independent claim 106 recites, *inter alia*, “the central body is bounded by an outer surface and further wherein the entire outer surface has a polymer coating thereon.”

Thus, for at least these reasons, claims 93, 94, 95, 96, 101, 103, and 106 are allowable over the Bryan reference and are therefore in condition for allowance. Claims 102, 121, and 122 depend from and further limit claims 101 and 103 and are therefore also in condition for allowance.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 107-110, 112, and 113 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bryan in view of the prior art. Claims 107 and 108, as amended, both recite, *inter alia*, “the central body is bounded by an outer surface and further wherein the entire outer surface has a polymer coating thereon.” Claim 110 recites, *inter alia*, “the coating is placed on the central body by dip coating.” Claim 112 as amended recites, *inter alia*, “a central body. . . bounded by an outer surface, wherein the entire outer surface has a coating thereon.”

For at least these reasons, the cited art does not support the rejection of claims 107, 108, 110, and 112 and should be withdrawn. Claim 109 depends from and further limits claim 108, and claim 113 depends from and further limits claim 112 and therefore are also in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

As a result of the foregoing, it is respectfully asserted that pending claims 1-44, 56-61, 66, 67, 70, 71, 74-76, 81, 82, 84-96, 101-103, 106-110 and 112-122 are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner deem that any further amendment is desirable to place this application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,



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R-132355_I.DOC

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